

# Analysis of Provider Choice

## Overview

As part of STD Surveillance Network (SSuN) project, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) collects detailed information about the types of providers who diagnose gonorrhea cases in the Richmond area (including the localities of Richmond City, Chesterfield and Henrico counties). This information is not generally available through traditional surveillance methods. These additional data are of particular importance locally, since in comparison with other SSuN sites nation-wide, a large proportion (35% in 2010-11) of Richmond area patients are diagnosed with gonorrhea in non-ideal settings, such as hospital emergency rooms.

In addition, phone interviews are conducted with patients living in the Richmond area who have recently been diagnosed with gonorrhea. These SSuN interviews help VDH track trends in patient characteristics and risk behaviors. A new series of questions were added to these interviews in May of 2012. The new questions concern patients' reasons for choosing to seek care at the provider or facility that diagnosed them with gonorrhea. That is, interviewers attempt to ascertain why patients sought care at one particular health care facility as opposed to some other facility. Patients are also asked about their health insurance status, and whether or not they had to pay a co-pay at the time of service. It is hoped that these data will help develop a better understanding of patient care seeking behaviors.

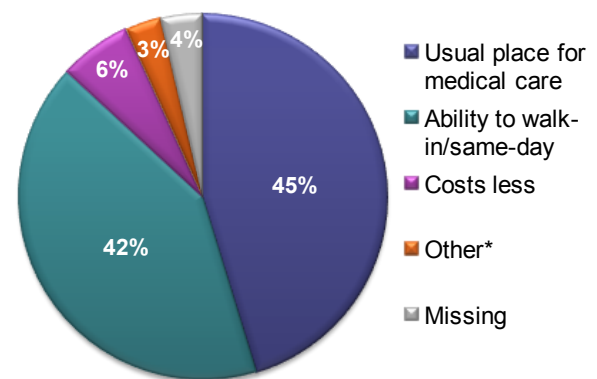
One hundred ninety patient interviews, incorporating these new questions, were completed from May 1, 2012 through August 31, 2012. Preliminary findings

from these data are summarized in this report. More comprehensive analyses will be conducted after additional interviews have been conducted.

## Provider Choice by Patient Demographics

There are some fundamental differences in where patients are diagnosed with gonorrhea. Previous SSuN analyses have indicated that women are significantly more likely to be diagnosed in OB/GYN or family planning facilities (42%), whereas men are more likely to be diagnosed in emergency rooms or urgent care clinics (46%). Approximately 16% of women and 34% of men are diagnosed by STD clinics.

Figure 1. Reported Reasons for Provider Choice



## Reasons for Provider Choice

The primary reason that patients report for choosing the provider or facility where they sought care for their gonorrhea infection was because it was either their usual place for medical care (45%), or because the facility allowed walk-in or same-day appointments (42%). Fewer patients reported choosing a provider based on cost, privacy concerns, or for other reasons.

Of the 32% of patients who were diagnosed by STD clinics, the majority (52%) reported attending that facility because the clinic offered walk-in or same-day appointments, followed by 18% who attended because of cost issues. Seventy-eight percent of patients diagnosed by OB/GYN or family planning clinics reported that was their usual place for medical care.

### Quick Summary

- \*45% of interviewed gonorrhea patients were diagnosed at their usual place for medical care.
- \*52% of patients diagnosed by STD clinics sought care there because the clinic offered same-day or walk-in appointments
- \*35% of interviewed patients had no health insurance coverage at the time of their diagnosis.
- \*65% of patients diagnosed by STD clinics reported not having health insurance coverage.

## SSuN Special Focus: Provider Choice

### Health Insurance Status by Provider Type

Overall, 60% of interviewed gonorrhea patients reported having some kind of health insurance, while 35% reported no health insurance. Among patients with health insurance, 54% had private health insurance, and 40% had publically-funded health insurance such as Medicaid.

Health insurance status may impact provider choice, as there were notable differences in insurance status by provider type. A high proportion of patients diagnosed by private providers or by OB/GYN or family planning facilities had health insurance (100% and 86% respectively). Similarly, 83% of those diagnosed in urgent care centers reported health insurance. In contrast, 53% of patients diagnosed by emergency rooms and 32% of patients diagnosed by STD clinics had health insurance. In other words, patients without health insurance were more likely to be diagnosed with gonorrhea in hospital emergency rooms or in STD clinics.

Table 1. Health Insurance Status by Provider Type

Provider Type	Not Insured		Insured	
	N	%	N	%
Hospital Emergency Room	19	40%	25	53%
Urgent Care Clinic	3	17%	15	83%
STD Clinic	39	65%	19	32%
OB/GYN, Family Planning	2	5%	32	86%
Private Provider	0	0%	10	100%
Other	3	17%	13	72%
Overall	66	35%	114	60%

Twenty-seven percent of patients reported having to pay some type of co-payment for the visit when they were diagnosed with gonorrhea, while 70% reported not having a co-pay. Co-payments were more common among patients who had health insurance (35%) compared to patients who did not have health insurance (15%).

### Infection Symptoms by Provider Choice

The choice of provider also seems to be influenced by whether or not the patient was experiencing symptoms

### What is SSuN? A Quick Overview

The STD Surveillance Network (SSuN) is an enhanced surveillance project sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The purpose of SSuN is to fill critical gaps in national surveillance and improve the capacity of national, state, and local sexually transmitted disease (STD) programs.

SSuN has two main components: STD clinic surveillance and *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* (NG) population surveillance. The former involves collecting enhanced information on patients presenting to STD clinics, while the latter involves interviewing patients diagnosed with gonorrhea in the general population. The data captured as part of SSuN include information not only on STD diagnoses, but also on patient demographics, disease symptoms, treatment, and high-risk behaviors.

Twelve sites across the United States now participate in these enhanced surveillance activities, including 42 STD clinics in 115 counties. Nationally, SSuN now captures information on approximately 20% of all gonorrhea cases diagnosed annually.

In Virginia, three localities participate in the SSuN project: Richmond City, Chesterfield County, and Henrico County. Enhanced surveillance data is captured for approximately 6,000 STD clinic visits and over 1,000 cases of gonorrhea each year in Virginia.

of gonorrheal infection. Overall, 44% of patients were experiencing some symptoms of infection when they were diagnosed. This included 50% of patients diagnosed at urgent care clinics and STD clinics, and 43% of patient diagnosed at hospital emergency rooms (Figure 2). While the average duration of symptoms prior to obtaining care was 13.1 days, this also varied by provider type; 35% of patients attending hospital emergency rooms and 43% of patients attending STD clinics had experienced symptoms for less than five days.

Figure 2. Infection Symptoms by Provider Type

